

**Great Lakes, IL** - Surrounded by sailors, veterans, community leaders, first responders and students, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) helped lead a September 11 remembrance ceremony held today at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. The ceremony marking the one year anniversary of terrorist attacks against the United States included a military color guard, bagpipers, and a reading by Jake Scott, an eighth grader at Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights who submitted a poem entitled “United We Stand” in response to Congressman Kirk’s outreach to local schools for writings and artwork related to September 11.

Following a moment of silence honoring the Pentagon attack and a fly-over by four F-16 fighter jets from the 183rd Fighter Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard, Congressman Kirk joined Admiral Ann Rondeau, commander, Naval Training Center Great Lakes, Firefighter Angerrett, a Pentagon first responder, veteran Johnnie Allen, Chief Master Sergeant retired U.S. Air Force and Jake Scott for the laying of four wreaths honoring those lost. Wreaths were placed in remembrance of our military, civilians, first responders and allies.

During the opening moments of today’s ceremony, Congressman Kirk offered the following reflection on a day known simply as, September 11:

*“September 11th - it is the 21st century’s day of infamy.*

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*“On September 10th, America stood victorious. Our parents won two world wars and the Cold War. In a new presumed age of peace, the cost of our freedoms in blood and treasure looked less expensive than what our grandparents paid.*

*“On September 11th, we relearned a set of history’s painful lessons:*

*“The world is still dangerous. Good intelligence is the first line of defense, and Freedom is not*

free.

*“Our country is unique. We are united not by language, nationality or religion. We are united by a commitment to human liberty. From Lexington to Gettysburg to Normandy, our ancestors fought for democracy, tolerance and free speech. Our ideals made us strong but they are not shared by others. The attackers envision a world of intolerance, silence and dictatorship. In the face of their attack, we loosened a terrible swift sword because our American ideals are worth fighting for.*

*“They are also worth dying for.*

*“One year ago, I sat over breakfast in the Pentagon with Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld when the attack began. In many ways, this day has not ended. It is changing us, our families and our country.*

*“Much has been reported on what happened that morning. Less has been said on what happened that afternoon. Deep in the Indian Ocean, the Enterprise Battle Group was sailing home after a long deployment. Watching the tragedy unfold on CNN, the ship’s Commanding Officer, James Winnefield, ordered the ship back into harm’s way without waiting for Washington. He knew one of the President’s first questions in a crisis is “where are the carriers?” The U.S. Navy - our Navy - began combat operations against the terrorist bases just 30 days after the Twin Towers came down.*

*“We have accomplished much this year. We have buried and mourned our dead. We have increased security at airports and other public places. Congress approved funding for our military and homeland defense. Our men and women in uniform won a great victory in Afghanistan.*

*“And we won something else far more important. From the rubble of terrorist hate, a renewed and resolved nation answered the call of unity, courage and generosity. Our children are now the most patriotic in decades. They are proudly called the “911 generation” - rededicated to the ideals that founded our nation.*

*“Today, we raise our flag to remember the murdered souls of that fateful September morning. We honor the veterans who gave our nation to us. We thank all who serve now -- military, police and fire -- whose patriotism shows on their uniform.*

*“This conflict is not over. This day provides key teachings:*

*To Americans, our ideals are clear with our people’s mission to expand freedom;*

*To our leaders, your anger was tempered by quiet determination against an agile foe;*

*To our children, your patriotism is evident and your future will be secured; and*

*To our military, get ready.*

*“As I look out on this military audience, I would paraphrase Shakespeare’s Henry V:*

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers [and sisters];*

*For [they who sail] with me*

*Shall be my brother; be he ne’er so vile*

*This day shall gentle his condition:*

*And gentlemen and women in [America] now a-bed*

*Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,*

*And hold their [lives] cheap whiles any speaks*

*That fought [for America] upon [this] day."*

*"On behalf of the Congress and a grateful nation, I thank you for your service. The faith and resolve of this great nation will lead us to justice for those killed and protection from those who might strike us again.*

*"Our cause is just, your service is honorable and the way forward is now clear.*

*"God bless America."*